

REMARKS**Pending Claims**

Entry of this amendment is respectfully requested. Upon entry of this Response, the claims 1-5 and 7-25 are pending. Claims 1, 8, and 21 are amended herein. All claims depend from one of independent claims 1 or 21 and therefore are amended through dependency.

Amendments to the Specification

The title and first two paragraphs of the specification are amended to refine the translation. It will be apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art that the Applicants' invention relates to what is typically referred to as an "air-laid" process, as opposed to a "wet-laid" process. In an air-laid process, dry fibers are deposited on a web, using an air current. Only after the dry fibers have formed into a dry fiber layer is the dry fiber layer moistened. In contrast, a wet-laid process is one wherein a slurry of a cellulosic pulp is created and then water is removed from the pulp yielding a sheet or layer.

It will be apparent from the whole of Applicants' description that the Applicants' process is related to an air-laid process. For example, para 0052 (as numbered in the publication) describes the beginning steps in the method as:

Cellulose fibers 10 ...are continuously deposited by a hammer mill by a first former 1.1 onto a conveyor belt 3 as loose fleece 11, so that a layer of tangled cellulose fibers is produced . . .

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112

In the Office Action, a rejection was made under 35 U.S.C. §112 to claims 1 and 21.

Applicants are unclear about this rejection. Claim 1 does include the recitation of "essentially" in steps a and b. However, Applicants regard this as appropriate as there is nothing in these steps that is a narrow range or limitation. Because of the nature of fibers spread on a web, it is impossible for this to form an exactly uniform layer when spread as recited in step a; rather, any such layer can at most be essentially uniform in thickness and this will be appreciated by those of ordinary skill in the art. Similarly, it is impossible for every part of every fiber to end up bonded as a result of

step b; rather, the lion's share of the fibers will be bonded, but it will not be uncommon for a stray fiber or part of a fiber to escape being bonded. Therefore the recitation "fibers are essentially interconnected and self-bonding", Applicants assert, is not indefinite, but is meaningful to those of skill in the art. The steps of claims 1 and 21 that do recite some ranges or parameters (steps c and d), no words such as "essentially" are used. Therefore, the Applicants submit that the rejection under §112 should be withdrawn.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. §102(e)

The Examiner has rejected claims 1-5 and 7-25 as being anticipated by Schmidt et al ,US 6,893,525. The Applicants respectfully submit, however, that Schmidt's process is a wet-laid process. As such, Schmidt does not show or suggest forming a layer from dry fibers before moistening a dry web of material, as Applicants' recite in claims 1 and 21. Schmidt begins with a slurry of fibers entrained in a liquid, then dehydrates the slurry to create a layer. This is fundamentally different from the method recited in independent claims 1 and 21 that begins by forming a dry fibrous web from dry fibers and then moistening that fibrous layer. That latex is an ingredient used at some point in both Schmidt's method and Applicants' method, does not change the fact that the steps recited in Applicants' air-laid method are not the same as, or even analogous to, Schmidt's wet-laid steps. Therefore, the Applicants submit that the claims recite a method neither anticipated by nor obvious in light of Schmidt.

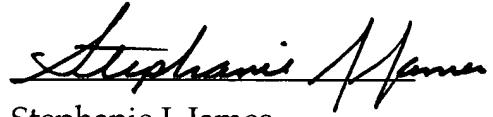
CONCLUSION

All of the claims remaining in this application should now be seen to be in condition for allowance. The prompt issuance of a notice to that effect is solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

CONCERT
By its attorneys:

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